Rules of the Game
Constructs (Part Three)
By Skip Williams

Last week, we considered the processes involved in building and repairing constructs. We also considered the effects of mindlessness and a few methods for recognizing a construct when it's posing as an inanimate object. This week we'll look at the living construct subtype and reflect on the differences between it and creatures of the construct type.

Living Construct Traits

A living construct is built from a combination of organic and inorganic materials, much like any other construct, except that some of the organic material is either living or imbued with life during the creation process. For example, the warforged living constructs from the **Eberron** *Campaign Setting* have bundles of rootlike fibers that serve as muscles.

In any case, this fusion of living and nonliving elements makes for a unique creature with characteristics all its own.

Vulnerable Minds: Most living constructs have Intelligence scores. Those that do have organic minds (or the artificial equivalent) are susceptible to mind-affecting magic.

Living, But Tough: A living construct has a Constitution score and at least rudimentary biological processes.

Living constructs don't eat, sleep, or breathe, and most living constructs cannot do any of these things. One could, however, build a living construct that can mimic these activities. The living tissues in a living construct are either self sustaining or capable of drawing nourishment from the environment in some non-intrusive way. In any case, a living construct's need for sustenance is so small it can live indefinitely without breathing or eating.

A living construct may or may not have a nervous system and a circulatory system. If it does, these systems are very hardy and difficult to disrupt. A living construct isn't subject to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, fatigue, exhaustion, energy drain, nausea, or sickening. A living construct can use the run action, but doing so will tire it out, as noted on page 144 in the *Player's Handbook.* A living construct suffers all the normal effects of a forced march (see page 164 in the *Player's Handbook*).

A living construct has some life process that are subject to failure and the creature is vulnerable to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, death effects, and necromancy effects. The low level of biological activity in a living construct's body leaves it susceptible to effects that require Fortitude saves unless the effect is one that is listed in the previous paragraph.

Since it is alive, a construct can be raised or resurrected if slain.

Thanks to the inorganic elements in a living construct's body and the rudimentary nature of its biological components, a living construct cannot heal damage on its own unless it also has the fast healing special quality. It is possible, however, to repair damage to a living construct through the Craft Construct feat (see [Part Two](#)). The various *cure wounds* spells from the *Player's Handbook* work on living constructs, but only at half effect; roll the spell's effect as usual, but divide the amount of healing in half, rounded down. The *repair damage* spells from *Complete Arcane* have full effect on a living construct. Though the **Eberron Campaign Setting** describes how a warforged can be repaired by a character with ranks in certain Craft skills, this does not extend to all living constructs."

A living construct's body is subject to premature death if it suffers a massive shock or injury sufficient to disrupt its biological functions. A living construct is subject to the death from massive damage rule (see page 145 in the *Player's Handbook*). A living construct also has the ability to cling to life when heavily damaged. Most rules for death and dying (see pages 145-146 in the *Player's Handbook*) apply to living constructs, except as noted here.

A living construct reduced to 0 hit points is disabled and limited to only a single standard or move action each turn. A strenuous activity, however, doesn't deal any damage to the disabled living construct. For example, a warforged wizard with 0 hit points could cast a spell as a standard action. The character could not use a move action during the same turn. Unlike a human wizard, casting the spell while disabled would not damage the warforged wizard.

A living construct with fewer than 0 hit points, but more than -10 hit points is inert. The creature is helpless and unconscious. The living construct, however, is automatically stable. It doesn't lose any more hit points unless something deals the creature more damage.

Constitution, Not Mass: A living construct gains (or loses) hit points based on its Hit Dice and Constitution modifier. A living construct does not gain any bonus hit points due to size.

Standard Senses: Living constructs don't automatically have low-light vision and darkvision with a range of 60 feet (though they could have these abilities; check the creature's description to be sure).

Run

You can run as a full-round action. (If you do, you do not also get a 5-foot step.) When you run, you can move up to four times your speed in a straight line (or three times your speed if you're in heavy armor). You lose any Dexterity bonus to AC since you can't avoid attacks, unless you have the Run feat (page 99), which allows you to keep your Dexterity bonus to AC when running.

You can run for a number of rounds equal to your Constitution score, but after that you must make a DC 10 Constitution check to continue running. You must check again each round in which you continue to run, and the DC of this check increases by 1 for each check you have made. When you fail this check, you must stop running. A character who has run to his limit must rest for 1 minute (10 rounds) before running again. During a rest period, a character can move no faster than a normal move action.

Forced March

In a day of normal walking, a character walks for 8 hours. The rest of the daylight time is spent making and breaking camp, resting, and eating.

A character can walk for more than 8 hours in a day by making a forced march. For each hour of marching beyond 8 hours, a Constitution check (DC 10, +2 per extra hour) is required. If the check fails, the character takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. A character who takes any nonlethal damage from a forced march becomes fatigued. Eliminating the nonlethal damage also eliminates the fatigue. It's possible for a character to march into unconsciousness by pushing himself too hard.

Unless stated otherwise in the creature's description, assume that a living construct can see, hear, taste, touch, and smell at least as well as a human can.

In Conclusion

That wraps up our look at constructs. I hope I've helped demystify these unusual creatures for you.

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for many years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

Visit our website at www.wizards.com/dnd